

Lower Hatchie

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1980.
- Acres: 7,394 in fee title.
- Located in Lauderdale and Tipton counties, TN.
- Location: The refuge headquarters is located 18 miles west of Highway 51 on Highway 87.

Natural History

- Refuge lies adjacent to the Mississippi River along the scenic Hatchie River.
- Concentrations of ducks, geese, raptors, shorebirds, wading birds and neo-tropical migrants.
- Refuge also administers the Tennessee Department of Conservation owned Sunk Lake.
- Habitat acreage:

Bottomland hardwood forest	4,288
Cropland	1,257
Open water	75
Upland forest	222
Grassland	665
Marsh	887

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Two-person staff.
- 120,000 visitors annually.
- Base funding is from Reelfoot NWR Complex.

Refuge Objectives

- Protect, enhance, and manage habitat for migratory birds and endangered species.
- Maintain and enhance bottomland hardwood forest.
- Provide compatible consumptive and non-consumptive public use opportunities.

Management Tools

- Water management for waterfowl, shorebirds and wading birds.
- Cooperative farming.
- Mechanical/chemical control of noxious weeds.
- Silvicultural techniques for resident and migratory wildlife.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Cooperative partnerships.
- Sanctuary for waterfowl.
- Wood duck nest box program.

Public Use Opportunities

- Hunting, including youth hunts.
- Fishing year-round in Mississippi and Hatchie rivers and associated oxbows, and Champion Lake.
- Fishing seasonal at Sunk Lake, and Teal and Shoaf Ponds.
- Eight miles of gravel roads for refuge access.
- Logging trails for hiking/hunter access.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.

Calendar of Events

March-June: Crappie and bass fishing peak.

Wildflowers are abundant.

Northern snowmelt swells Mississippi River.

Birds migrating north.

Excellent wildlife viewing opportunities.

July-September: Catfishing still good.

Habitat management programs busy.

Heat, humidity, and bugs can be extreme.

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September-December: Squirrel hunting begins.

Other hunts follow through end of year.

National Wildlife Refuge Week in October.

Excellent wildlife viewing opportunities.

January-March: Small Mississippi river rises can inundate refuge.

Hunting closes end of February.

Wintering waterfowl use peaks.

Questions and Answers

Why can't I ride my four-wheeler on the refuge like I can on the state land?

Refuges are managed for different purposes than state lands. However, handicapped persons may request a Special Use Permit depending on the extent of their disability.

Why can't I ditch my farm into the refuge?

Siltation from adjacent farmland is a serious threat to refuge habitats totally conflicting with the refuge's mission. Let us discuss other land management options for you or the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

Why can't I get permits for hunting at the refuge entrance?

Hunt permits are available at the refuge headquarters and several local businesses to provide a more equitable distribution to everyone that wants one.

Why can't I camp on the river while I'm fishing?

Uncontrolled camping is not compatible with refuge objectives and could pose a safety hazard.

I've been here many times visiting the refuge. Why don't I see more personnel?

Although the refuge systems land base and needs are relatively large compared to other agencies, its voice in Congress, and therefore its budget, is unfortunately relatively small. We are, however, beginning to gain more support.